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CAST A WIDE NET

Kids are Web-savvy. What about teachers and parents?

PARENTS looking to bridge the generation gap with their kids can sum up the biggest obstacle they face today in two words: the Internet. Sure, moms and dads think it's important that kids get online, but how can they learn to keep things kid-safe? That's where Ken LaVan and Kaila Colbin come in with ParentsConnected, a nationwide seminar tour helping parents get connected to and learn about the Internet.

"We want to help narrow the digital divide by educating parents and teachers," says LaVan.

Funded by sponsors and private investors, the tour began in September 2000 at the Technology 2000 Conference in Miami and runs through May 2001. In their first year, LaVan, 32, and Colbin, 27, expect to educate more than 200,000 parents in such cities as Atlanta, Dallas, Los Angeles, New York City and Philadelphia. By their third year? Seven million parents.

LaVan and Colbin founded their company, ParentsConnected.com, in January 2000. The Fort Lauderdale, Florida-based company got its start by making computer and Internet training books and videos for teachers and parents. To test their touring idea, the partners called school districts to gauge their interest in marketing the free seminars to parents and teachers. The response was overwhelming: Nineteen school districts immediately signed up for the 75-minute seminars.

"We try to make the seminars really enjoyable so people don't come and feel like they have to sit through a lecture," Colbin says. "We have a lot of interaction with the audience."

In the end, it's all about helping parents and their children connect. Says LaVan, "It's really educating parents to work with their kids." E

GOT NET NERVES? *Ken LaVan and Kaila Colbin help parents get over their Internet ignorance.*